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I am writing this letter and request on behalf of myself and Five Brothers who served, two of whom gave their Lives, in the U. S. Military. Five have passed on, thus I have made this my mission to rectify a grave injustice bestowed upon my Brother Lewis, being denied a Purple Heart Medal after being killed in an Enemy Action.

On April 25th 1944 this telegram was received at the Esper home. "The Navy Department deeply regrets to inform you that you Son, Lewis V. Esper, Seaman First Class United States Naval Reserve, is missing at sea in the performance of his duty and in service to his country".

One year later on April 26th 1945, this letter was received from the Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal. " While serving as a member of the Naval Guard Crew on board the SS John Straub, when that vessel, while enroute from Seattle Washington to Attu Island was damaged as the result of one or more internal explosions and subsequently sank almost immediately." The crew consisted of 71, 27 Naval Armed Guards, 43 Merchant Marines, and one Army Security Officer. Only 15 survived.

Bottom line is, the SS John Straub was sunk by the Japanese Submarine HIJMS I-80 on April 19, 1944. Enclosed is the history of this submarine. I have more documents regarding this ship.

Recently I requested a copy of Louie's Service Record from the National Personnel Records Center in St Louis, Missouri. They sent me a Death/Report of Casualty document. In the box marked Enemy Action it's marked NO.

The Liberty Ships were known to suffer stress fractures in the cold water and several broke apart and sank because of those failures. However, this was not the cause of the SS John Straub sinking.

I am requesting the history of the SS John Straub from laying of the Keel until its ultimate sinking on April 19th 1944.

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